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**A History of  
The Richardson Building  
36-40 Center Street  
Rutland, Vermont**



PAUL CROSSMAN

*The Richardson Building (on the left) was built in 1884-1885. The Paramount Theatre (on the right) has recently acquired the Richardson Building. The above photo was taken in August 2006.*

# About the Author



Paul J. Crossman, Jr. is a Rutland native. He received his education at Rutland High School and the University of Vermont. He retired from General Electric Company in 1990 after 36 years service as an electrical engineer. He is a Vermont licensed professional engineer (Electrical) and a former Vermont licensed private investigator. Paul also volunteers at Rutland Regional Medical Center, and as an usher at the Paramount Theatre. He has written previous quarterlies for the Rutland Historical Society entitled "Pine Hill Stone Crusher and Early Stone Crushing Practices in Vermont 1887-1932" (Volume 28 Number 2), "Development of Rocky Pond Recreational Area, Rutland, Vermont 1952-1954" (Volume 29, Number 1), "Rutland Vermont Jails 1784-2000" (Volume 30 Number 1) and "A History of the Paramount Theatre – Rutland, Vermont 1914-2004" (Volume 34, Number 3).

## Introduction

The Richardson Building, built in 1884-1885, is rich in its early history. Located in the heart of downtown Rutland, this 122-year old building has been home to many colorful, prominent and diversified tenants from U.S. Government offices to a physician, undertaker, attorney, contractors, numerous retail merchants and apartment rentals. The Richardson Building has seen several owners and is currently owned by the Paramount Theatre. The addition of this building to the Paramount Theatre provides needed floor space and facilities and room for future expansion. At the request of the Paramount's Executive Director, this article was written to help qualify for national historical register status.

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# **A History of The Richardson Building 36-40 Center Street Rutland, Vermont**

**By Paul J. Crossman, Jr.**

Construction of the Richardson Building, a four-story red brick building located at 36-40 Center Street in Rutland, Vermont, was begun in 1884 and completed in 1885. The first deed to this property was recorded 13 March 1884 in the City Clerk's Office in Rutland from C. L. Long to George Richardson, hence the name Richardson Building.

The following article was published in the *Rutland Weekly Herald* on 5 March 1885:

George Richardson's new block on Center Street will be completed April 1. Work was begun in August last and a large number of men have been constantly employed on it ever since. It was designed by J.J.R. Randall and has been built under his supervision. It is four stories high with a basement and measures 60 by 55 feet. The front is of pressed brick, with marble trimmings. On the ground floor are three stores, each 20 feet by 55 feet; on the second, 15 rooms designed for offices; on the third, three tenements of five rooms each, and on the fourth the Masonic Hall. The latter has reception, dining and officers rooms as well as a large hall. Fifteen carpenters are now at work finishing the upper floors. It is a fine building and an ornament to the street

Later references to the Richardson Building appeared in the *Rutland Weekly Herald* as follows: On 26 March 1885 the reporter notes that "the inside of George Richardson's new block on Center Street will be painted by Mr. Martell." On 23 April 1885 the paper commented that Post Roberts of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was very comfortably settled in its new quarters in the Richardson Block.

In 1913 the building was sold by Addie Richardson to Patrick F. Howley and was thereafter called the "Howley Block". The building

is presently referred to under the original name as the Richardson Building by the media and others.

Dating from the 1870's style, this four-story building is the last surviving example of a commercial structure with a modified mansard roof in Rutland. The vertical articulation, fenestration and crowning cornice and mansard element make this a well-proportioned architectural composition.

Center Street, Rutland, Vt.



*(l to r) The Richardson Building, tallest building in the center, is adjacent to the Geo. Richardson Livery and the Chaffee Block. The Geo. Richardson Livery became "The Playhouse" in 1914 and is now the Paramount Theatre.*

## Building Construction

The Richardson Building is described as a brick veneer commercial block of four stories. It features cornice brackets, segmental arch windows, and marble belt course (a continuous horizontal layer of marble). Building dimensions are 60 feet wide by 50 feet deep or 3000 square feet per floor.

The fourth floor was used as a recruiting center during World War II (1939-1945) and possibly the Korean War (1950-1953). It may have been a ballroom before that. Steel rods were installed through the building between front and rear walls to provide strength and stability to the structure. There were no supporting timbers used in these walls. Floor joists were positioned between side walls in an east-west direction. The building survived a quite substantial

earthquake in the early 1980's when tenants "suspected the boiler had blown up" as they ran from the building, and "often felt tremors". It is believed that earlier structures at the same location had burned.

The cornice or horizontal molded projection of the building is wood and metal, bracketed and deeply overhanging with a modified mansard roof or parapet. There are brick pilasters with marble bands and marble string courses with stepped brickwork below the cornice. Flat-arched brick lintels and recessed panels are found between stories.

An oil-fired Weil-McLain Model 678 steam boiler is used to heat the building. The large ballroom on the fourth floor is also heated by a Franklin fireplace. A new sprinkler system has been installed throughout the building.

In 1977 Crandell Associates Architects did a study for the Rutland Historic Preservation Project and made the following recommendations for work that the building needed: Repoint brickwork; brickwork has been sandblasted, should probably be coated with a proper weatherproof sealant. Repair, scrape and paint cornice and parapet. Scrape, caulk and paint sash and frames. Store fronts: remove existing marble veneer and stucco, extend brick pilasters to sidewalk, restore shop cornice or introduce sign corridor. Design new storefronts.

## **Some Tenants of the Richardson Building (1880's -1980's)**

### **36 Center Street**

Blue Cross Blue Shield 1967-1974  
Commercial Credit Corp 1978-1979  
Eastern Estate Tea Co 1914-1917  
Ezra Sound Co 1983-1985  
Joe's Billiard Parlor 1936-1944  
New York Bakery 1913  
Rutland Clothing Co 1927-1934  
Rutland Shoe Shine Parlors & Billiard Rm 1920-1926  
Swanson Music Store 1981-1982  
Wilson Boys & Students Store 1957-1960  
Wilson Sports Equipment 1946-1955  
Wilson's Boys & Students Store, Inc 1957-1960

### **38 Center Street**

Commercial Credit Corp 1967-1977  
Dorothy's Bakery 1940  
Eisig, M, Tailor 1889-1892

Essential Alternatives 1981-1985  
 Josie Hoy Millinery 1920-1933  
 Louis Cereghino Confectionery 1914-1917  
 Vermont State Employment Service 1936-1937  
 Wilson Boys & Students Store 1957-1960  
 Wilson Sports Equipment 1942-1955



RUTLAND IN RETROSPECT

*The New York Fruit Market was located at 38 Center Street in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It also sold homemade ice cream.*

### **38 ½ Center Street (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Floors)**

Alexander, M. Preston, dental lab 1951-1954  
 Automobile Legal Association 1960-1967  
 Baray, Jonathan Hair Design 1985  
 Barhart Realty 1969  
 Benson, Frank 1920  
 Benson, T.N. 1916-1917  
 Brown, Arthur 1920-1934  
 Burns, Mrs. Grace D 1929-1934  
 Canty, Dennis J, undertaker 1920-1934  
 Cereghino, Louis 1916-1917  
 Champlain Valley Work & Training Program 1976-1981  
 Champlin, Mrs. Lillian 1935  
 Childseekers 1985  
 Clark, James, Lawyer 1916

Concor International Ltd 1982  
 Darwin Green Advertising Agency 1947-1958  
 Dawson, Mrs. Ruth A., Christian Science Practitioner 1965-1968  
 Deter Security 1985  
 Doud, Mrs. Eva 1927-1930  
 Douglas Creative Hairstyling 1981-1984  
 Equifax, Inc 1982  
 Fair Haven Outlet Inc 1973-1974  
 GE Apparatus Dept 1947-1969  
 GE Pwr Dist & Dist Sales Div 1971-1974  
 Green, George W 1922-1926  
 Guido's Tailor Shop 1985  
 Guyette Realty 1969  
 Hanrahan, John D, MD 1887-1923  
 Hitchcock, William 1923-1935  
 Holistic Health Center 1982  
 Holmes, B.J. 1982  
 Ingerson, Clayton 1928  
 Killington Credit Bureau, Inc 1968-1971  
 L&F Construction 1974-1977  
 LaFrance, Charles 1913  
 Lazarra, Michael 1979  
 Loyal Order of Moose 1913-1915  
 McKay, T.W., Smokers' Articles 1914-1915  
 Miner, Burrill H. 1932-1933  
 Neary, George W., accountant 1958  
 Nelson, Nancy 1983  
 NET&T Construction Dept 1947-1954  
 NET&T Plant Engineering 1947-1952  
 Noble, J. Fred 1916-1917  
 Norfolk Electric Co. 1958-1960  
 O'Brien, Francis J., public accountant 1947  
 Parent, Thomas 1928 (possibly a barber at Berwick Hotel)  
 Paul, D.C., Tailor 1916-1917  
 Pecor, Frank, contractor 1913  
 Peisch, Archibald M. Company 1971  
 Phillips, Michael 1926  
 Planned Parenthood 1976-1977  
 Radigan, Joseph 1969-1974  
 Reynolds, Clarence, Contractor 1933-1934  
 Richmond's Beauty Supply 1947  
 Riley, H.M., chiropractor 1983

Risk, Deborah L., psychologist 1981  
 Rock Wool Home Insulation 1947  
 Royce, E.B. 1914  
 Rutland Fair Association 1951-1960  
 Silisky, Joseph, accountant 1969-1971  
 Spellman, J. Dyer, lawyer 1914-1915  
 Storm, Thomas 1935  
 Sunshine Natural Foods 1978  
 Swohn, Gustave H. 1929-1930  
 Tri-State Credit Bureau 1966-1967  
 Tucker, Frank, general contractor 1947-1967  
 Urban Youth Center 1973-1974  
 US Armed Forces Induction Office 1944-1946  
 US Army Recruiting Office 1941  
 US Army Recruiting & Induction Office 1942  
 US Forest Service 1936-1942  
 Vermont Lumber Corp 1947  
 Veterans Assistance Office 1985  
 VT Retail Grocers Assn. 1969-1974  
 WAC Recruiting Office 1944-1946  
 White, Addie 1913  
 WPA Immigration Copying Project 1940

#### **40 Center Street**

A.W. Goddard Hardware Co. 1913-1914  
 A.E. Leonard, Milliner 1920  
 Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co, The Great 1922  
 Dalton Restaurant 1940-1941  
 Electrolux 1969  
 Jones & King Milliners 1917  
 Little Big Store 1973-1977  
 Mardi Gras circa.1976  
 The Acme Café 1936-1939  
 The Dogwood 1984-1985  
 The Emperor of Ice Cream 1981-1982  
 The Fruitland 1924-1933  
 The Sound Barrier 1985-1991  
 Thomas Mangan, Lawyer 1967  
 Wasik's Café 1982-1983  
 Wilson Boys & Students Store 1957-1960  
 Wilson Sports Equipment 1942-1955





*Photo of the Richardson Building taken in 1976.*

Bob Shannon owned the Richardson Building from the early to the late 1970's. He bought the building based on the need for a central office space while he owned and managed several Rutland area movie theaters which included the Grand, the Paramount, the Plaza Cinema at the Rutland Plaza, Studio I & II at the Rutland Mall, the Fort Warren Drive-In and others under the name of "Entertainment Enterprises".

After purchasing the Richardson Building, Bob Shannon built a luxury apartment, commonly referred to as "The Penthouse", on the fourth floor and resided there for a period of time during the 1970's. The apartment was spacious, split level, and featured 1970's style white shag carpeting throughout. A large 27 by 36-foot open area living room had (10) eight-foot high windows and a 15-foot high

ceiling with no structural supports in the center. With its hardwood floor and grand piano, the "Penthouse" soon became a popular gathering place for parties and dancing in a club-like atmosphere, and was known as THE place to go. There were three raised-level bedrooms, a bath with sunken tub and sauna, a dining room and a narrow step-down kitchen.

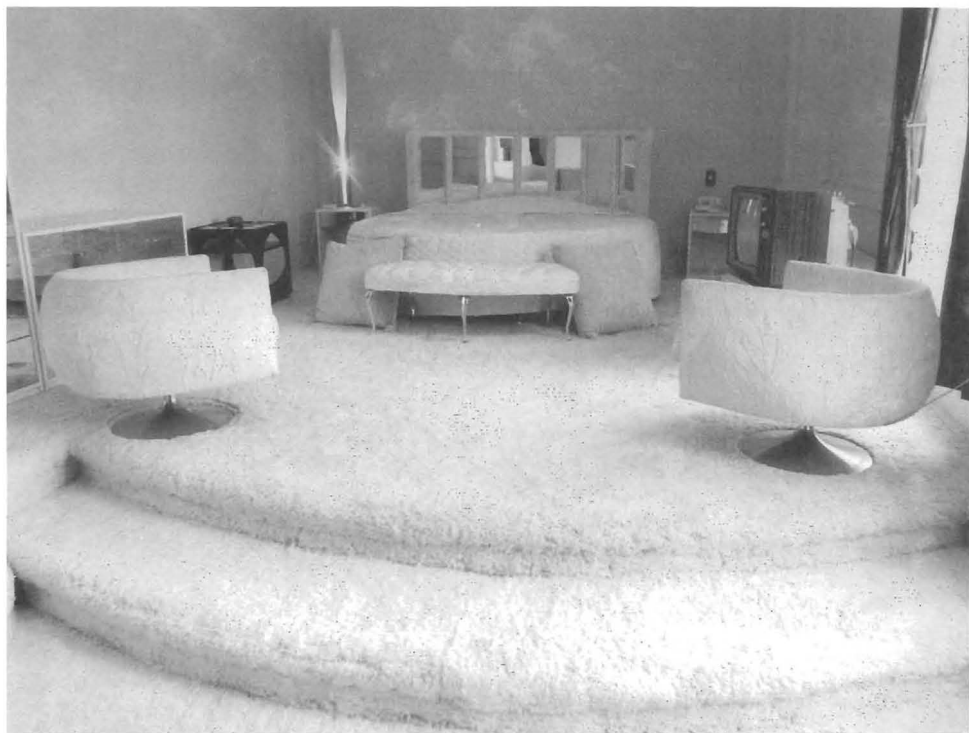


BOB SHANNON

*Penthouse Apartment – Living room and dining room areas.*

An incandescent light fixture with a circular-shaped stained glass globe depicting the MGM Studio lion logo was installed in the ceiling. The fourth floor could be reached by an elevator that Shannon had installed. Two eight foot high mahogany doors, retrieved from the Paramount Theater basement, provided entry to the apartment upon exiting the elevator. The glass panels on the doors were inscribed in gold leaf "38 ½ Center Street" and "The Penthouse". The elevator was locked out at the third floor with limited access to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. It has since been taken out of service. A new elevator for the building is in the planning stage, contingent on additional funding. Black and white marble panels forming the lower front facade of the building are chipped, broken and loose from years of service and are also scheduled for replacement.

Faced with Shannon's financial losses from his movie businesses, the Rutland Savings Bank foreclosed on his mortgage, and the building went back to the former owners, Clement J. Abatiell and Robert L. Accavallo, a partnership known as Creative Management Associates. In 1979 the building was sold to Holmeswood Investment and Star Enterprises, companies owned by Barbara Holmes. Barbara and her daughter Bizia lived in the penthouse apartment for about five years.



BOB SHANNON

*The master bedroom in the "Penthouse".*

Bizia was five when the family moved into the building. She and her friend Jen Cullen were neighbors and the only children being raised in the Center Street commercial district. Together they formed their own theatre company, practiced after school, and held performances in a large office space on the third floor. As young entrepreneurs they also created their own greeting card business that lasted for nearly 10 years. Living at the Richardson was unique and impressive for Bizia, a memorable experience that she will always value.

Barbara Holmes used the fourth floor area to hold solar energy workshops and massage workshops. Her principal business, known

as Essential Alternatives, was one of the first futon manufacturers in the country. Truckloads of bales of cotton would arrive from Boston, be tossed down the stairs to the basement, and later turned into futon mattresses. Judy Palfey of Commercial Building Services, who was retained by Barbara to clean the apartment, remembers her as a person who insisted on cleanliness and was a woman who personified beauty. Elegance and spaciousness prevailed.

During her 1979 to 1985 tenure at the Richardson, Barbara recalls several colorful tenants including “Mardi Gras” at 40 Center Street, a cabaret with entertainment owned and operated by Bob Shannon.



BOB SHANNON

*Mardi Gras Cabaret, 40 Center Street. Bartender is Wally Sabotka.*

There was also the “The Emperor of Ice Cream”, a restaurant and coffee shop complete with poetry readings, owned and operated by Wayne Turiansky from 1981-1982, and his successors, Kathie and Karol Wasik from West Rutland who took over the business; followed by Wasik’s Café from 1982-1983. Kathie Wasik married Billy Comstock who had a storefront music business, Ezra Sound, at 36 Center Street for many years and practiced with his band in the basement.

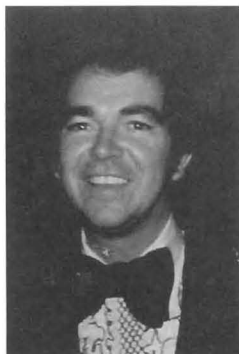
Many small businesses started on the ground floor. Storeowners were extremely motivated to be successful during a difficult

economic time. They tried to attract the public by being creative. Barbara was open to new business ventures and was very supportive of her business tenants.

Following Barbara's departure from the building in the mid 1980's the fourth floor apartment was then rented to Tom Joyce, Jeff Sanborn and Tim Kane who did their own cleaning and maintenance in what was described as a "high traffic" area. Tim's father, Tom Kane, was the building manager.

Carol Macleod was a business tenant at 38 Center Street from 1983 to 1985 where she owned and operated Essential Alternatives, a business that she had purchased from Barbara Holmes. Carol then relocated her one-of-a-kind gift shop with 800 square feet of floor space on the first floor to its present location at 22 Center Street with 2000 square feet of floor space.

On 30 May 1985 Star Enterprises sold the building to Frank J. and Ellison C. Lieberman of Woodstock, Vermont for \$187,500. Frank Lieberman was a book designer and typographer and Ellison Lieberman owned and operated Gallery 2 in Woodstock, the first commercial art gallery in Vermont. The Liebermans purchased the building on the recommendation of their tax advisor with the intent of upgrading the building to improve the aesthetics of the Center Street area. A new marquee was installed and plumbing was upgraded. Mrs. Lieberman recalls minor incidents of vandalism by boys climbing up a fire escape to the roof of the building during the Halloween parade. Mr. Lieberman became ill and medical bills were mounting to the point where it became necessary to sell the property. On 24 March 1995 the Liebermans sold the Richardson Building to the Paramount Center, Inc for \$170,000. Frank died one month later on 19 April 1995.



*Bob Shannon*  
Owner: 1975-1979



*Barbara Holmes*  
Owner: 1979-1985



*Ellison Lieberman*  
Owner: 1985-1995

In the late 1980's and early 1990's architectural and feasibility studies were conducted to determine the feasibility of uniting the Paramount and Richardson Building to provide modern amenities with a fully restored historic theatre and to provide for future expansion.

The Richardson Building was one of the filming locations for the 1996 action movie "Diamond Run" directed by Rutland's own David Giancola.

In 1999 Developer Damian Zamias donated \$70,000 to the Paramount Theatre toward purchase of the Richardson Building.

The Richardson Building presently has four front entrances from Center Street:

- 36 Night Owl Gallery and Moon Brook Gallery of Art
- 38 Paramount Box Office
- 38 ½ Stairway to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Richardson Building
- 40 The Brick Box

In March 2006 Crossroads Arts Council, a local arts and entertainment organization, was poised and ready to merge some of their programs with the Paramount Theatre. Crossroads was prepared to lease space on the second floor of the Richardson Building. The Paramount had agreed to provide them with free office space for one year. Crossroads disbanded however leaving the Paramount with three newly renovated rooms for lease.

One of these rooms, known as the Fred Bagley Room, is currently used for board meetings. Two additional rest rooms have also been provided on the second floor for use by balcony patrons. Access to the second floor is by a stairway from 38 ½ Center Street, from the Paramount Administration Office, or from the theatre balcony.

Further renovations to the third and fourth floors are anticipated to fully utilize the building. Renovation work is currently on hold pending receipt of grant monies, donations, or other resources to provide the necessary funding. Completion dates are unknown at this time.

A new space measuring 20 feet by 45 feet, the former Mardi Gras and more recently the Volunteer Usher Corps Room, has been developed for use by smaller audiences and is called the "Brick Box". This area is accessible from the Paramount Box Office at 38 Center Street or from the front entrance at 40 Center Street.

## Bibliography

Barbara Holmes Briggs, former owner and tenant of Richardson Bldg  
 Bizia Greene, Barbara Holmes' daughter and former tenant  
 Bob Shannon, former owner and tenant of Richardson Bldg  
 Carol Macleod, Essential Alternatives  
 Ellison Lieberman, former owner of Richardson Bldg  
 Harold Loomis, carpenter  
 Jeff Sanborn/Tim Kane/Tom Joyce, former residents  
 John W. Berryhill, architect  
 Judy Palfey, custodian  
 Kent Maxfield, Deter Security  
 Rutland City Clerk's Office  
 Rutland City Directories, 1886 to 1985  
*Rutland Herald*, 19 July 1985  
*Rutland Seasons*, Summer 1988  
*Rutland Weekly Herald*, 5 & 26 March 1885, 23 April 1885  
*The Historic Architecture of Rutland County*, 1988  
 Tom O'Brien, Paramount Technical Director

## Warranty Deed Holders of the Richardson Building/Howley Block

DATE	BOOK	PAGE	GRANTOR (SELLER)	GRANTEE (BUYER)
13 Mar 1884	45	294	C.L. Long	George Richardson
18 Jul 1912	26	498	Addie Richardson	Patrick F Howley
30 Jun 1913	31	71	Lewis Martel	P F Howley
01 Jan 1955	100	134	Mae Howley	Patricia Reh fuss
	100	135	Mae Howley	Thomas Howley
23 Nov 1957	107	151	Mae Howley	John Reh fuss
	107	152	Mae Howley	Jean Howley
	107	153	Mae Howley	Patricia Reh fuss
13 Aug 1964	124	118	Thomas/Jean Howley John/Patricia Reh fuss	Creative Management Associates
04 Apr 1975	78	64	Rutland Savings Bank	Abatiell/Accavallo
10 Jun 1977	196	423	Foreclosure	Docket No. S208-77Rc
13 Jan 1978	197	111	Robert L Accavallo	Clement J Abatiell
01 Mar 1979	204	645	Clement J. Abatiell	Holmeswood Investment
11 May 1984	236	703	Holmeswood Investment	Star Enterprises
30 May 1985	245	622	Star Enterprises	Frank J. Lieberman Ellison Lieberman
24 Mar 1995	343	705	Frank/Ellison Lieberman	Paramount Center Inc



*Entry doors to 4th floor penthouse apartment  
at 38 1/2 Center Street.*